

Press Release – Compost – Another Kind of Black Gold
For Immediate Release

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Compost – Another Kind of Black Gold

Massachusetts wants to help you keep your yard and our cities and towns green. It's easy! Did you know that about a fifth of your typical household's "trash" is yard waste? Throw in kitchen scraps and paper towels and you've got nearly half of your family's discards, which you could be using to make your yard, garden and houseplants greener, and your neighbors green with envy!

Not only that, but those fallen leaves and grass clippings, which we tend to think of as "waste," are also banned from disposal with the trash by a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection regulation. That's because it is better for our health and environment to recycle them by composting than to send them to a landfill or incinerator. It is also illegal to dump yard waste into wetlands, streams or ponds. And don't even think about burning leaves; clean air standards have prohibited that for years.

Most towns in our area provide a convenient way to recycle yard waste by offering curbside collection, a drop-off location or low-cost compost bins for do-it-yourselfers. Some towns even give the finished compost to residents for their gardens!

But the easiest way to recycle leaves is to shred them with a lawnmower, leaf vacuum, or chipper and use this high quality mulch around shrubs, trees and flowerbeds. Leaves are also known as the "backbone" of a compost pile. You can lighten your trash and make it sweeter smelling by adding all your fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, and even paper towels to those leaves. (Leave out the meat and dairy products!) It's easy to make compost because earthworms and other soil organisms that turn organic material into humus do most of the work. To make it even easier, many Massachusetts cities and towns offer low cost, rodent-resistant compost bins. Or you can build your own bin. Enclosed compost piles keep out pests, hold heat and moisture in, and look tidy. They can be made of wood, concrete blocks, metal or plastic. Put it in a convenient location within reach of your hose.

Each time you add kitchen scraps, bury them under the leaves. Keep the pile damp – if it dries out, decomposition will stop. Add a few shovelfuls of soil occasionally to increase your "unseen workforce" of decomposers.

Your leaves and leftovers will become usable compost in about 6 months! Compost is like a life insurance policy for plants. Put a handful in each transplant hole, spread it around existing plants, or broadcast it over your lawn as an organic fertilizer. Known as "black gold" to gardeners, it provides nutrients, holds in moisture, and helps plants resist disease. By using compost you'll save money and the planet because you won't need pesticides or chemical fertilizers!

For more information, go to www.mass.gov/dep or www.Earth911.org. Compost-a little effort makes a big difference.